

A Look At U. S. Defense Chief

# Has McNamara Lost His

## Halo?

EDITOR'S NOTE—Five years on the job, Secretary of Defense Robert Strange McNamara has cut a wide swath through Washington. His accomplishments are prodigious, his enemies livid, his friends powerful.

By SID MOODY  
WASHINGTON (AP) — Once upon a time Robert Strange McNamara could seemingly walk onto the field, throw a few warmup passes and then massacre his opponent, any opponent, 68-0.

"But those days of the lopsided scores are over," says an old friend of his. The secretary of defense is no longer always on offense.

In Congress, where he has scarcely lost a battle, McNamara has, as one legislative aide put it, "lost his halo." And the public seems more critical of the man who, rightly or wrongly, it expects to win or end a

war that has, rightly or wrongly, been named for him.

McNamara has been secretary of defense longer than any other man.

"In that job you use up your assets, then you begin to accumulate liabilities," said a former Pentagon executive. But if after five years it has seemed time to some to take shots at McNamara, it also is an appropriate time to take stock of him.

Friend and foe agree almost unanimously he has been the Pentagon's best boss. The fact that the United States can fight at all in South Viet Nam without hocking the family jewels is testimony to the brilliance and foresight of his administration. The proof of the Pentagon is its ability to fight. That it is doing.

Ironically, however, it is undoubtedly the war in South Viet Nam that has put McNamara on a spot. He runs the Pentagon.

The Pentagon runs the war. But he is also a major maker of Vietnamese policy second only to President Johnson. Therefore if South Viet Nam has become controversial, so inevitably has McNamara.

What, then, is his role in the controversy?

"Among Johnson's advisers McNamara is first among equals," said one of the secretary's former top aides. There are probably several reasons for this beyond Johnson's admiration for those who get things done. (The President said he sleeps better at night knowing McNamara is in the Pentagon. On the other hand a former service chief says he has trouble sleeping knowing McNamara is in the Pentagon).

McNamara is by nature forceful, aggressive. Secretary of State Dean Rusk is quiet, reflective. "It is obvious," said a congressman, "that this difference will carry over into the cabinet."

If McNamara is playing a larger role in foreign policy than defense secretaries have heretofore, it is not solely because of personality. It is also by design.

McNamara feels the principal achievement of his reign has been the wedding of United States military abilities with the requirements of the nation's foreign policy. During the Eisenhower administration, U.S. foreign policy was stated as containment of communism wherever it should appear.

The military policy enforcing this doctrine was all-out nuclear retaliation by bomber and missile. The United States was ill-equipped to meet a lesser challenge with a more moderate response. While it was not entirely his own idea, McNamara field-marched diversification of American military capabilities to meet the various exigencies of foreign policy. This, inevitably, has woven the Pentagon more deeply into the fabric of diplomacy.

In the Pentagon itself, McNamara

mara has moved into actual military operations. Charles E. Wilson, for instance, saw his role as secretary as one of production chief. Military decisions were the military's. McNamara, who has brought civilian control to the Pentagon as no one before him, has been a five-star civilian, the day-by-day manager of the war.

The question remains, however, to what degree McNamara for \$325,000.

mara has the President's mind as well as his ear. McNamara is reportedly less of a hawk than Rusk. He is said to be dubious that a ground war can be completely won in south Viet Nam. President John F. Kennedy leaned heavily on McNamara but also consulted with the service chiefs. Johnson worked solely through McNamara but reportedly is now listening more and more to the military and feels, said a former high defense official, that while wisdom has always cautioned against U.S. ground involvement in Asia, they will obey orders and fight the war as they have all others, hard and all out.

A final aspect of the war that has brought criticism to McNamara has been shortages in logistics and supplies, particularly 2.75-inch rockets, 750-pound bombs used by the B52s and helicopters. "God, yes, there were shortages," said an official.

A high source noted that 400,000 2.75 rockets were fired in January; that 500,000 40mm grenades, a weapon not even approved last May, were launched in the same period; that B52s which no one "ever dreamed" would be dropping iron bombs, can now handle 108 750s each.

"These are astronomical quantities, more than any one ever anticipated," he said.

But, say a number of critics on Capitol Hill, that is exactly the Pentagon's job: to anticipate. They dispute the claim by McNamara's deputy, Cyrus Vance, that while there have been a few transfers of supplies from U.S. forces in Europe none has affected military capability.

"That is just bunk" said a staff aide of a Senate committee who claims a division by division check has shown borrowing for the war has reduced combat effectiveness.

There are those in Congress

who, despite McNamara's disclaimer that needs, not budgetary guidelines, determine defense costs, feel he has taken economy into account rather than the fact that "war, by its very nature, is wasteful."

Aides of the preparedness subcommittee of both houses note that the Pentagon asked \$700 million more for Viet Nam in the 1965 budget, another \$1.7 billion last summer and \$12.7 billion more last month. "That's a 25 per cent error in planning," said one spokesman.

How foreseeable is the unforeseeable? replies the Pentagon.

"When you have an uneasy congress, you are bound to have more potshotting from the hill downtown," said Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield. "More questions are being raised that McNamara isn't the infallible man a lot of members thought he was. He is extraordinarily capable and well-intentioned, but makes some mistakes. Who doesn't?"

Not every one is as charitable as Mansfield. McNamara has long irritated some members of Congress by what they term, at best, "a coldly polite attitude" before it and an ability to "tip-toe around a question."

Rep. F. Edward Hebert, D-La., said last year that in his 25 years on the Hill he had never seen any one so contemptuous of Congress.

A former high aide of the secretary's notes an erosion of important support in Congress. Sen. Richard Russell, D-Ga., head of the Armed Services Committee, has been in ill

health and is up for re-election and more cautious of controversy, he said. Carl Vinson has retired and his successor as head of the House Armed Services Committee, Rep. Mendel Rivers, D-S.C., is not as congenial to McNamara's stewardship.